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Emilia Galotti and the Limits of Psychological Criticism

Frank G. Ryder

Psychoanalytic and psychological criticism of literature abounds, but the encounter, in an integral reading, of a fully qualified psychologist and an acknowledged literary masterpiece is not a commonplace event. In this light a recent interpretation of Lessing's *Emilia Galotti* deserves attention.* In addressing myself to it, I am more interested in examining the implications and consequences of the encounter than in making ad hoc objections to a specific interpreter or his work. Admittedly the line of separation is sometimes obscure.

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing is the greatest literary figure of the German Enlightenment, and his *Emilia Galotti* the first tragedy to establish itself permanently in the German repertory. Pro domo comparisons are odious, but the play is surely one of a dozen German classics of the genre. Its interpreter of current moment, Dr. Frederick Wyatt, is Professor of Psychology and Director of the Psychological Clinic at the University of Michigan. He also has a wide background in literary scholarship. He was assisted by an equally respected Germanist, Professor Ingo Seidler, likewise of Michigan. We are dealing therefore with a psychological analysis backed by flawless credentials.

Since most plays and novels have characters about whom we speculate as about recognizable individuals, a reliable psychological interpretation can promise more in terms of understanding the work itself that can most other extrinsically centered approaches, for example, the sociological. It purports to rest on prior and transcendent models, more or less timeless in their validity, and it therefore offers the heady prospect of seeing Oedipus and Antigone, Werther and Emilia, Madame Bovary and Stephen Dedalus both as members of a finite and simultaneously comprehensible order and as people (but for the grace of God) like us. Too, the progress of scientific inquiry into the human psyche is undeniable; modern psychologies like modern astronomies should have greater explanatory power than older ones.

A modest irony inheres in the fact that—perhaps for good reason—literary critics tend to work with the earlier Freudian (or Jungian) models, products of the late nineteenth or early twentieth century and ipso facto not unqualifiedly “modern.” But encompassing theories in any field tend to be more attractive in their youth. As they grow older they are buffeted by new facts; the arguments of others and the doubts of the framer eat away at the structure and often the data escape from the frame and are ready to be recaptured in a new formulation. Freud himself modified

many of the claims that scholars of literature still tend to identify with his name and use in their criticism, and other theories of behavior have been devised since. Although psychoanalytic theory has been remarkably durable, the relationship between Freudians and present-day psychologists is often a troubled one, with ramifications not immediately apparent to scholars of literature. Reassurance on this score is one reason to welcome Wyatt's *Lessing*.

A related irony may lie in the fact that there were psychologies before Freud too, including some in the eighteenth century. It is at least parenthetically incumbent on us—if not here, then elsewhere—to consider that *Lessing*, *Schiller*, and *Goethe* (or their audiences), if they viewed characters of literature in the light of any systematic psychology, may have had thinkers such as *Locke* and *Lavater* in mind, much as we must, in search of an understanding of *Shakespeare's* characters, attempt somehow to balance *Bradley* or *Ernest Jones* with at least a glance at the “humours.” An early and convincing demonstration of this kind of alternative is *Stuart Atkins's* article on *Lavater* and *Goethe*, which establishes the place and the uses of contemporary psychological speculation in the context of past literature. Analytically oriented critics obviously do not maintain that writers “use” Freud, except where this is patently so, as with *Thomas Mann*. What they do maintain or imply, often so strongly as to give their work the tone of reckless synchronism, is that authors as well as their fictive characters, of whatever time, operate under the same inescapable constraints. Or they admire in the writer the naive but prescient psychologist. Applying the insights of Freudian psychology to *Lessing* is therefore tantamount to a doubly powerful claim of transcendent validity.

In all such judgments and undertakings, psychologists also aim at a degree of certitude totally foreign to the creator of fictive characters. Literature reduces the indeterminacies of existence but it does not pretend to eliminate them. It imposes order on chaotic reality but that ordering is limited and elusive. As *Philip Wheelwright* long ago made clear (in his book *Metaphor and Reality*) its truth is couched in the approximations of metaphor. *Michael Payne* reminds us that the works of great writers may even contain implicit warnings against the failure to concede this necessary ambiguity: “Neither Freud . . . nor *Ernest Jones* recognizes *Shakespeare's* built-in argument against reductive theories of *Hamlet's* mental condition . . . One very likely source of *Hamlet's* despair is his being quite literally surrounded by would-be psychotherapists [*Polonius*, *Gertrude*, *Rosenkrantz* and *Guildenstern*].”

The greatest appeal of the psychological approach is at the same time the touchstone, in yet another domain, of its essentially reductive nature. Visualizing the persona of a literary work—not the Jungian persona, obviously—as a real person rests on a necessary accommodation made both by writers and by readers or playgoers. If the persona were not like a person much of the effect and power of literature would be gone—or it would be a different thing from what it has been in the Western tradition. But writers more than readers, more even than critics, know that the persona is quite something else as well, that it responds to other claims, is created under other constraints, has other modes of existence than those of psy-

chological reality. The persona exists, is portrayed, has its verisimilitude in such internal domains as the autobiographical complex and social or philosophical constructs; even in myth or the literary tradition itself (as Frye and Eliot tell us). Vis-à-vis the psychological, all of these represent competing, limiting (or at times, of course, supporting) validities.

The characters of Lessing's play demand psychological analysis (of which they have received no dearth), but the play calls equally for examination of its socio-political implications (and has had little). It begins as a differentiated portrayal of courtiers and citizens caught up in the intrigues of a duodecimo prince in a vintage despotism of seventeenth century Italy, a situation with palpable affinities in eighteenth century Germany. The action centers on the prince's amorous pursuit of an upper-middle-class girl, and the work ends in an agonizing personal debacle, the cause and true nature of which have ever since eluded definition. The girl, Emilia, is according to the playwright himself a latter-day "middle class Virginia," her death therefore to be compared to Virginius' stabbing of his daughter to save her from the lecherous and ruthless decemvir Appius Claudius. Unlike Livy, however, Lessing has his heroine just before her death plead susceptibility to sexual desire. The end of the play becomes as I have characterized it elsewhere, "an event of almost gratuitous psychological horror: a beautiful and apparently innocent young woman dies, on what was to be her wedding day, murdered by her father, a man (we have been assured) of rectitude and highest moral standards. Her death is also willed by the girl herself, thus the moral equivalent of suicide."

Recapitulation of Wyatt's analysis will serve to fill in at least part of the antecedent action:

Goethe is reported to have said that Emilia is either a "Gans" or a "Luderchen," a silly goose or a loose woman. In fact she is both. These are indeed two aspects of the same character type, the hysterical, manifesting the typical conflict of temptation and guilt feelings. *Emilia* is not a clinical case but a tragedy, hence the portrayal is different. It is not an ordered description of symptoms; yet we can derive from it the problem which the heroine faces—or can't face. "The actual subject matter of the tragedy is not Emilia but her problem, a prototypical and universal conflict structure." She is not so much a heroine as "sacrificial victim in a ritual which she is destined to carry out.... Indications of Emilia's problem are to be found everywhere."

The play contains two fundamental, mutually supporting symmetries: Odoardo and Appiani, "the two pillars of virtue, stand in contrast to the libertine Prince and the blackguard Marinelli." Emilia contrasts with Orsina, who exhibits an alternatively possible fate.

The Prince is a playboy, attractive to all women. It is unlikely that even such a virtuous young lady as Emilia is unaware of her beauty. This is her "primary mode of relating to others," and we get a sub rosa hint of her

sensuality, the “passions she is capable of arousing in others and by the same token embodies in herself.” The spectator is familiar with this image from his own fantasies: “It is the image of the feminine.” Although Orsina is different from Emilia we see through her that love is dangerous and women in passion are capable of “unerhörte Dinge.”

Odoardo, the “obdurate moralist” believes that only force can hold Emilia on the path of virtue. He wants to keep her for himself. He forces upon her his own rigid conscience. She is thus subject to intense anxiety at all “forbidden drives, particularly sexual drives.” Emilia has become everything Odoardo wanted: modest, churchgoing, etc. But even going to church when she does may express her fear of sex in marriage.

Claudia seems neither vain nor frivolous but warmhearted, even though she does not fully understand her daughter’s problem. It is natural that Emilia depends on her and accepts her judgment.

Emilia’s narration of her encounter in church reveals a clear hysterical crisis. Her reaction is not to want to leave but to try to suppress what threatened her. She must have dealt with such importunities before, but never successfully. If she regarded it as an importunity she would have reacted differently. If she doesn’t feel “sündigen wollen ist auch sündigen” (“the desire to sin is itself sin”) why does she say so? The Prince’s proposition is close to “sexual aggression,” hence Emilia’s overreaction, in panic, and her protective amnesia for what passed between her and the Prince. She imagines that she answered although we are told by the Prince that she didn’t.

Claudia’s words “Nimm es für einen Traum, was Dir begegnet ist” (“Regard what happened to you as a dream”) show good clinical intuition but don’t help Emilia much.

The clinical summary of Emilia’s problem is this: “Because of her repressions and her completely unresolved infantile relationship to her father, Emilia’s ego cannot establish itself as strong and independent enough to deal with powerful instinctual demands.” She is thus representative of a well-defined character type, the hysterical personality.

It doesn’t mean much to say that Emilia dies in order to defend her honor, nor because her life is in ruins. The clinical paraphrase is rather this: “You, father, have made me what I am—now you must take the consequences. I cannot allow myself to be reproached by my own conscience—the very conscience that embodies *your* ideas and *your* prohibitions.” Her death restores the Oedipal bond with the father, indeed stabbing is an archetypically phallic act.

The logic of the Play is psychologically perfect: Emilia was attracted by

the Prince, though she may not have loved him. She knows she has opened her imagination to things her conscience could not deal with. As a result of repression and sublimation she is naive and susceptible to sudden "Triebüberschwemmung." Her mother, who helped her overcome her first crisis, leaves; and her father persistently awakens her feelings of conscience and guilt. Both innocent and aware, modest and "triebhaft," Emilia sees the "Luderchen" in herself, and is forced to escape the dangers of her own drives through an act of violence.

Thus far Wyatt. As I see it this analysis is subject to limitations in its own terms and in terms of the competing modes to which I have alluded.

The greater the claim made for validity—and Wyatt's claim is extensive and emphatic—the more one expects adequacy of evidence. The matrix of established psychological types may provide a certain shortcut to analysis, but it may also tempt one to premature diagnoses. In the case of *Emilia*, and in some of Lessing's other works, there is an astonishing paucity, indeed a suppression of evidence. In this light the detailed and positive identification of Emilia's problem seems in itself premature and perhaps unscientific. I have previously alluded to the problem of evidence and will only summarize here. If the information Lessing gives on the Prince is purposely ambivalent, permitting him to accuse yet exculpate, that which pertains to Emilia is incredibly slender, permitting no certain judgment. Emilia is on stage in only 6 of the 43 scenes. (Marinelli appears in 21, the Prince in 17). She has not a single soliloquy, thus denying us a traditional form of access into the mind of the protagonist. Except for a dozen words in ii.6 she speaks only to or in response to someone; every utterance is situationally contingent.

Contradictions of "fact" are numerous in the play. Emilia says of the Prince in church: "Er sprach; und ich hab' ihm geantwortet" (ii.6). Wyatt himself notes one of the Prince's two explicit contradictions of this, but he attributes Emilia's error to guilt fantasy. To me it is part of the necessary ambiguity of blame and innocence upon which Lessing builds his own ambiguity of condemnation and exculpation for the Prince.

Lessing intentionally obscures the target of words and weapons. Who, for example, is the intended victim of the dagger Odoardo forgot to bring or that which Orsina did bring? What, at the very end of the play, are Marinelli's intentions in re the same dagger?

He also leaves references and meaning unspecified: In v. 6 Odoardo's "Das Spiel geht zu Ende. So oder so?" (The play [game] is coming to an end. This way—or that?) and Emilia's "Denn wenn der Graf todt ist—wenn er darum todt ist—darum! was verweilen wir noch hier?" ("Because if the Count [Appiani, her fiancé] is dead—if that's why he's dead, if that's why—what are we staying here for?") As I have suggested, the ambiguities are multiple and intended: "Because she now sees what the Prince's plan was, while she did not before? Because she failed, out of incipient sensual attraction, to stem Gonzaga's advances? Because she was guilty of the same

failure, but out of excessive self-confidence (her much-praised decisiveness, her contempt of duress)? Because, having been persuaded not to tell Appiani what happened, she is ultimately responsible for his death? Or because the whole pattern of her life in society, directed (like the ill-fated choice of silence) by her mother, has been false, thus implicating not only herself but also Claudia?"

In a word, the information upon which we might base any psychological interpretation is quantitatively meager, in itself incomplete or indeterminate, and dependent upon a mediating source (Lessing) who has reason to ambiguate. It is a little like a psychiatrist trying to analyze a patient by means of letters from a close but "involved" relative. The generalizations of psychoanalysis may prepare us to fill in gaps and counter indeterminacy, but surely there is a limit to how large the gaps and how pervasive the indeterminacies—particularly so when one can identify their purpose in another domain, namely the political.

In its own terms, Wyatt's reading also implies a concentration upon Emilia or Emilia's "problem" which reflects the analyst's concern with the individual case. Oversimplifying, one might say that the analytically oriented interpreter tends to see one figure in the work as the analyst sees one patient in the office. Obviously Wyatt's reading takes account of other characters, but the concentration is so heavily upon Emilia that the others tend to become fixed quantities, presumably of more or less unexceptional make-up, affecting her or generating responses by her, but not themselves the objects of similar scrutiny.

I do not maintain that Claudia is a sick person, but I question what Wyatt praises as the insight of her advice to Emilia: Consider it a dream. The result is that Emilia decides not to inform Appiani of the episode in church, which in "real person" terms means that the one figure in the play with true courage is removed from the determination of the outcome for Emilia, indeed is sent unwarned on his own fatal journey.

More serious is the strange but I think inevitable consequence, in an analysis determined to plumb the heroine's neurosis, of ignoring the really sick person of the play: Odoardo. Wyatt apparently accepts, as legions have, Odoardo as a stubborn pillar of virtue, the overly strict but benevolent paterfamilias, etc. This even has its counterpart in eighteenth century psychologies, witness Hillen's term "stiff-necked virtue." I have argued, and would still maintain, that Odoardo is from the beginning a remarkably unedifying figure, a man for whom his daughter is less a child than a reification of his way of life, his probity, his pride—and, alas, his own selfish vulnerability: "Das gerade wäre der Ort, wo ich am Tödlichsten zu verwunden bin" ("That [the rumor about the Prince and Emilia] is precisely the place where I can be most fatally wounded"; ii. 4). What kind of father worries, in his daughter's crisis, first about himself? This is not even Oedipal possessiveness. And what is Odoardo's famous stoicism, his calm and self-control, but the mask for a frightening combination of irresolution and volcanic instability? What happens to him as he moves toward the awful deed ostensibly demanded by heaven? Let us not forget that

Odoardo contemplates killing his daughter long before she asks him to or goads him into it. Does his mind not audibly disintegrate in the increasingly disjointed language of the last scenes, as he turns his legitimate hostility away from its rightful object, the Prince, to that which he nominally holds most dear, his daughter? Odoardo needs clinical treatment a good deal more than Emilia. But here again it is the interposition of the author which demands the immobilization of the figure, because Lessing, for his own reasons, could not let Emilia's father do what he "should have done" to the Prince, here or before, in our terms or those of Dilthey (who said that when Gonzaga asked Odoardo to be as a father to him, Odoardo should have run him through).

Earlier I objected to the real person fallacy that underlies the psychological analysis of Emilia, and I have in a sense just exemplified it in talking of Odoardo. The point is that it is emphatically not wrong to talk about the persona as a person but it is crucially important to do so accurately and cautiously. In what he rightly calls the 150 year old debate on Emilia's innocence, Wyatt essentially takes the negative: Emilia may be outwardly or by volition virtuous and modest, but she is in essence sensual, frightened by temptation and the possibility of being overcome by her own desires. Her inability to deal with her crisis stems from the undissolved Oedipal bond with her father. In a word she is not innocent. Accepting the treatment of Emilia as a real person, which is the enabling act of such an analysis, we may still raise objections concerning the verdict passed upon her. Most prominent among them: The Prince is, in this view reduced to a peripheral, almost coincidental role. All vectors upon the core of tragedy run within Emilia or at most in the dark spaces between Odoardo and Emilia. There is little room for awareness of the Prince as all-powerful libertine, corrupt head of a debased state, a hollow but infinitely scheming and dangerous man, willing to use the resources of power to engineer anything from murder to what he would call a love affair. Surely, on the spectrum of the causes of fear, outward duress and inner weakness have complementary bands. Surely a person can be legitimately frightened and for good reason driven to despair. The fact of course remains that Lessing, through Emilia, does suggest her sensuality, and with this the indeterminacy of innocence is inevitably established.

The real person fallacy is, as I have conceded, both necessary and natural, a recognition of the essential kinship and humanness of the literary figure. But it is well to remember that good writers go to considerable lengths to warn us that it is a fallacy, that the literary work and the people in it are constructs. One thinks of Tristram Shandy, and Sterne's elaborate confutation of "normal" time and space and the identity of the narrator. At the end of *Emilia*, Lessing seems to underscore the fact that characters in plays are not characters in life by writing a scene which in a sense cannot be acted, since any visualization resolves an ambiguity—which in other words can only be read. The essence of the situation is similar to the fundamental ambiguity of certain utterances in language that led to the awareness of deep structure and surface structure in transformational grammars. (A textbook illustration: *flying planes can be dangerous*, which corresponds either to *he flies planes* or to *planes fly* and which in isolation cannot be identified or "translated.")

The ending of Emilia offers, in the words of the Prince and the wordless actions of Marinelli, a surface structure which could be the embodiment of diametrically opposed realities and which cannot be staged without being referred to one or the other of these deep structures—unless one were to have recourse to Brechtian stick figures.

The dagger has been identified by Odoardo as “Zeuge des Verbrechens” (“testimony to crime”). He casts it at the Prince’s feet. The words of the Prince to Marinelli, “Heb ihn auf” (“Pick it up”) mean “I deny responsibility; you must accept it” or they mean “You are to commit suicide.” The latter in turn may be his literal intent or his rhetorical escape. Marinelli picks up the dagger and hesitates. To kill himself? Wondering if the Prince means it? Waiting for the Prince to equivocate (as he is wont to)? In defiance? Cynically aware that the Prince is once again posturing?

“Nein, dein Blut soll mit diesem Blute sich nicht mischen” (“No, your blood shall not mix with this blood”) means “You were going to turn the blade against yourself but you are not worthy to die by the same dagger that killed Emilia.” Or it means, at the other extreme: “We both know something must be said to give the tone of moral dismay while we still confront this dangerous situation, but don’t do anything drastic.”

“Geh” is to be translated “Leave, banished forever,” or “Get out of here at least temporarily,” or “I can deal with this situation only by asserting my power and righteous indignation” or “I must say this but we shall be together again as soon as the tempest blows over.” To assume that this last abyss of cynicism is implausible is to overlook the blend of depravity and disingenuousness which characterize the Prince through much of the play, and to discount the fact that the last noun of the play, a reference to Marinelli, is not *Teufel* but *Freund*.

The critically different deep structures that underlie and can be identically realized in all these utterances and attitudes are: (1) The Prince is finally and sincerely outraged; Marinelli is crushed. Or (2) The Prince is shaken and momentarily determined to take corrective action or at least say he will; Marinelli is uncertain as to the Prince’s intent. Or (3) Both are cynically dissembling: the Prince feigning outrage; Marinelli, fear and guilt. The problem for a unified psychological analysis is apparent.

The fundamental ambivalence which requires this and all related indeterminacies of the play lies in a domain the absence of which from Wyatt’s reading leaves it partial and ultimately inaccurate: the political. By the very force and sufficiency of its argument, an exhaustive explanation of Emilia on psychological grounds (hysteria or whatever) reduces to near irrelevance the entire political and social situation and makes it largely immaterial whether the libertine who triggers Emilia’s “unmanageable conflict between desire and guilt” is the absolute ruler of the country or a neighboring landholder—and identifies the play as a domestic tragedy. It also tends to deny what I take to be central to the ontogeny of the heroine: Emilia “is” what she “is” not because of Odoardo but because of Lessing.

I have repeatedly contended that the essence of Lessing's political attitude was caution or ambivalence, that he was acutely aware of the frequent corruption of Absolutism and its denial of liberty, but (despite the obdurate example of Appiani) certainly not prepared to advocate rebellious action. Even the overt evidence of biography suggests that Lessing's political attitude was one of caution or ambivalence. He could be boldly specific about the extent and locus of injustice: "Just try telling the truth to the aristocratic rabble at court," Lessing wrote to a friend in 1769; "just let someone in Berlin step forward to raise his voice for the rights of the governed and against exploitation and despotism, and you will soon find out which country, to this day, is the most servile in all Europe." Speaking (in the remarkable dialogues on Freemasonry called *Ernst und Falk*) of class differences, he labels them inevitable but not therefore either good or sacred and suggests the possibility of laying hand on them—doubly strong words in the context of praise for a secret society soon to be banned for its danger to the Absolutist establishment. Yet when the interlocutor Ernst asks the Mason Falk: "lay hand on them with what aim in mind?" Falk's answer is strangely evasive or limiting: "With the aim of not letting them (i.e. class differences) grow any larger than necessity dictates; with the aim of rendering their consequences as harmless as possible." Perhaps Lessing deserves credit for raising the irreverent question at all, but his answer is certainly not couched in the rhetoric of his contemporary Tom Paine. And as far as the play *Emilia* is concerned he both denied that it had anything to do with politics and at the same time agonized over letting it be produced at all. His worries were compounded by the fact that the premier of a new play by Lessing had somehow come to be a birthday present for the dowager duchess of Braunschweig, the playwright's own particular corner of the Absolutist world. The duke actually certified the work as safe for the stage, but Lessing absented himself from the crucial first night. In a way the duke was justified in his complacency and Lessing unwaranted in his qualms, because the play is not in its terms a political protest. Rather, social and political injustice are major determinants of the whole complex of author, characters, and situation. By the same token *Emilia* is in this respect *more* and *other* than a real person, and our judgment of her is incomplete unless we operate in all domains where she really exists. She is more than *Emilia Galotti* just as *Guastalla* is, as Schiller recognized, more than *Guastalla*: "*Guastalla liegt in Deutschland.*" To diagnose *Emilia* in terms restricted to her "real personality" and to speculate in this sense on everything from her attitude toward her father to her view of sex in marriage is almost as pointless and abortive as to try to draw a map of *Guastalla* based on the spatial clues of the play. In too brief summary I would repeat my suggestion that Lessing, in his acute ideological dilemma, both condemns and exonerates the Prince. The twin foundations for the exculpation of Gonzaga are the evil initiatives of Marinelli and the suggestion of *Emilia's* sensuality. That is why *Emilia* says she fears seduction. It is, to speak crudely, Lessing's fault, not hers. What can be the validity of a psychological analysis of the heroine in a situation like this? Essentially, no political reading of any breadth is compatible with a diagnosis that finds sufficient cause for tragedy in a disabling neurosis. The more the play is psychological the less it is political.

This train of argument (taken by itself, *not* in reference to the interpretation at issue) has a further and troubling implication, one which is regrettably timeless and has exonerated many an evil polity. The more convincingly neurosis or even psychosis can be identified as the cause for personal disaster in a political context, the less blame falls on the system. What if Creon had successfully accused Antigone of a pathological compulsion to bury people? The body politic is not morally required to accommodate itself to hysteria. Antigone has flaws, her vanity of righteousness and the exclusive pride of her indignation, but the lines of opposition between her and the state, as Sophocles draws them, are clear and clean. Emilia is no Antigone. She is weak and vastly put upon, both by the Prince and by Lessing. She is made to suggest personal, idiosyncratic, quite apolitical reasons for her own destruction. If we compound the indignity by seeing her as both a "Gans" and a "Luderchen," we forfeit most of our right to attack the ultimate though hidden enemy: degenerate autocracy.

Actually Lessing himself seems at times intent upon rectifying the balance in Emilia's favor. It is as if he were embarrassed to have let her accuse herself, to have questioned her innocence. The play abounds in suggestions of victimization not vulnerability, innocence not *Instinktansprüche*. Most of these suggestions, however, lie embedded in structural features, elements of imagery, allusions to literary tradition. No *person* exists in this sort of world, but the *persona* does. The concept of sufficient cause or verisimilitude in a psychological sense is irrelevant here. But such factors are an essential part of the persona's mode of existence and must be a component of our judgment of that persona and of the author's intent.

The guilt of the Prince, which Lessing is reluctant to establish by overt evidence, is established by covert. In the first act of the play two petitions are at issue. One is for a personal favor and is quickly signed because it is for an "Emilia Galot . . . Bruneschi." The other, which the Prince would just as eagerly sign, is a death sentence. The proportional algebra is invited— $a : b :: c : d$. On the psychological plane the lapsus linguae is natural but trivial, and the unseeming eagerness merely shows the Prince as callous and capricious. On the structural plane, it voices the playwright's cryptic identification of guilt.

That the Prince would treat Emilia as he treated his former lover Orsina is established not psychologically but by the parallelism of the portraits (i. 4). The first of the two that his painter friend Conti brings is of Orsina, but she is already discarded. The second is of Emilia. The equation is again invited. As if Lessing had not said enough to incriminate the Prince, he also causes him (i. 6) to throw or drop Emilia's portrait on the floor: "Auf der Erde? das war zu arg!" ("On the ground? That was really bad!").

Emilia's innocence is also covertly supported by a series of motifs which are psychologically neutral or inexplicable. Her victimization (rather than sensual complicity) is inherent in the repeated metaphor of purchasability. The Prince: "Am liebsten kauft' ich dich, Zauberinn, von dir selbst" ("Best of all, I'd like to buy you from your-

self [not your picture from Conti]" (i. 5). Later, Marinelli: "Waaren, die man aus der ersten Hand nicht haben kann, kauft man aus der zweyten . . . um so wohlfeiler" ("Goods that you can't have at first hand you buy second-hand . . . and so much the cheaper") (i. 6). Her blamelessness is further implied by what I have elsewhere proposed as a fairly elaborate parallel between Emilia and one of Shakespeare's most innocently wronged heroines, Desdemona. Its elements: the rose which needs must wither, the motif of the pearl, the use of "devil" to characterize Iago and Marinelli, the suicide-murder ("And makest me call what I intend to do / A murder, which I thought a sacrifice"), and finally the protective lie: Who did this deed? Desdemona: "Nobody; I myself. Farewell: / Commend me to my kind lord."

Such evidence is as real as that of psychologically authentic word and deed, and it is more "literary." The persona exists in this domain of structure, motif, and allusion, a domain largely closed to the psychological analysis of character. But the persona also exists in a world like ours and like us is accessible to psychologically informed understanding. In many great works the two ontologies are harmoniously joined. In some, like Lessing's *Emilia*, they are in tension, and we approach a truer understanding only as we move farther away from the work, so that our field of vision includes the author and his time. In no case should we be willing to abandon the psychological interpretation of fictive characters (nor of their creators), but we would do well to recognize the limits of the best scientific models of human behavior as illuminations of literature. We must ask not only how such models are most appropriately to be used but also how much they actually permit us to see and know. The answer to the first question is implicit in what has been said above and can be put in a few words: In the strictest sense, psychological models are not explanations but analogies, and as with all analogies it is important to establish differences as well as similarities. My answer to the latter is more elusive but I hope not evasive. In the language of the *Republic*, should we not imagine the character in literature, Emilia or whomever, as the shadow we perceive on the far side of the Cave, and that image as somehow produced not by one figure on the low wall between our backs and the light—such narrowness of vision seems to me the essential error of the psychological *aesthesis*—but by several, in miraculous coincidence casting a single shadow. Of these, one may well be the outline of a certain psychological type; the others being any number among many: an archetype of Frye, perhaps, or a body of tropes, a configuration à la Barthes, an embodiment of convention or tradition (the Misanthrope, the seduced commoner, Egmont redivivus), or even, as in Lessing's *Emilia*, a shape in a complex political topology

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*This article is an adaptation of a paper given at the Lessing Seminar of the Modern Language Association meeting of December 1974. The interpretation referred to is F. Wyatt, "Das Psychologische in der Literatur," in *Psychologie in der Literaturwissenschaft. Viertes Amherster Kolloquium zur modernen deutschen Literatur 1970*, ed. W. Paulsen (Heidelberg: Stiehm, 1971), 15-33. Wyatt's article is in German; the English I have placed in quotation marks is therefore my paraphrase or translation. Citations from the play, identified by act and scene, are given in

German (from the Lachmann-Muncker edition), with rough translation. My own interpretation, not an orthodox one, appears in "Emilia Galotti," *German Quarterly*, 45 (1972), 329-47; and "Emilia Galotti and the Algebra of Ambivalence," in *Husbanding the Golden Grain. Studies in Honor of Henry W. Nordmeyer*, ed. L. Frank and E. George (Ann Arbor: Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures, The University of Michigan, 1973), pp. 279-94. Quotations or adaptations are used by the editors' permission and are only roughly identified here. I also allude to articles by Stuart Atkins, "J. C. Lavater and Goethe," *PMLA*, 63 (1948), 520-76; G. Hillen, "Die Halsstarrigkeit der Tugend," *Lessing Yearbook*, 2 (1970), 115-34; and M. Payne, "Do Psychologists and Critics Speak the same Language?" *Journal of General Education*, 24 (1972), 179-83. The most convenient and reliable survey of work on Lessing is K. Guthke, *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1973²).